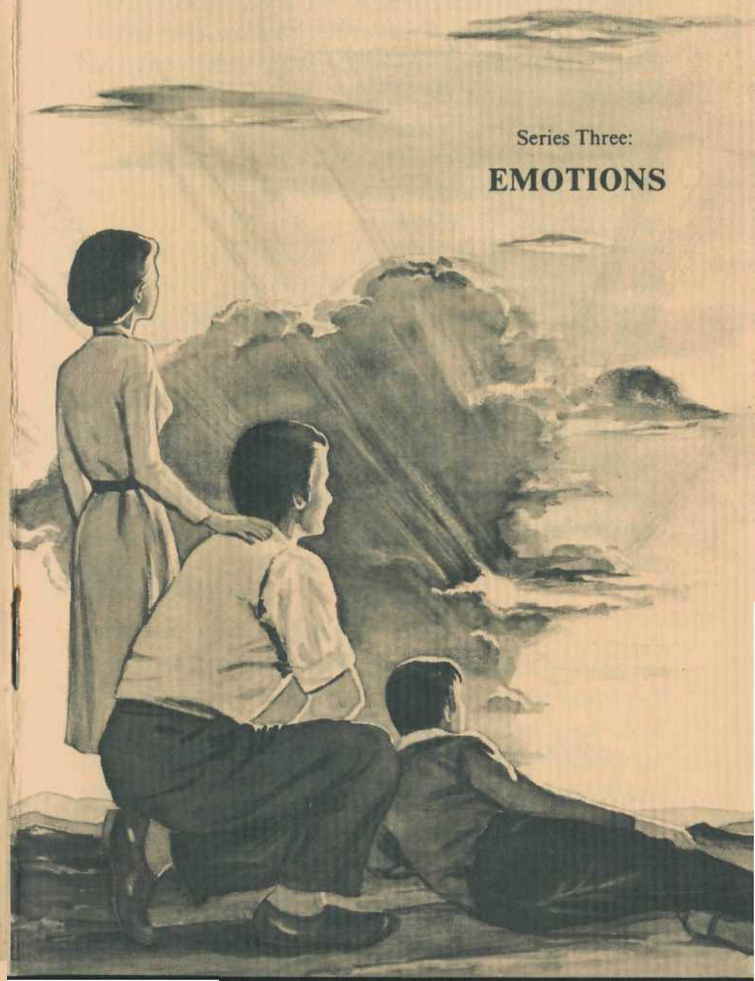


Practical Techniques For Everyday Living

Series Three:
EMOTIONS



THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER, AMORC
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Introduction

Emotions serve us in many ways, as we all know. Yet there have been times when we have wished we had been less emotional because of effects which followed later. To be *supersensitive* has both advantages and detriments. How do we know when it is best to display a natural emotion and when it is best to suppress it? Further, what emotions are *self-serving*, that is, beneficial, most all the time, and those which can redound to our discredit? We admire reasonable sensitivity in an individual, one who sympathetically reacts to his environment and circumstances. However, most of us do not look with favor upon one who is unreasonably aroused to an emotional display; simply put, one who gives full play to the whole gamut of the emotions without the exercise of judgment.

Since emotions play such an important part in life, sometimes more than we ordinarily realize, we believe that the contents of this booklet will serve you as still another "*practical technique for everyday living*."

IMPERATOR

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Emotions

Our emotional states are quite common to us. In fact, man has been an emotional being far longer than he has been a rational, or reasoning one. For eons of time, through years of intellectual darkness, man was more guided by his emotions than by his thought processes. Even today, most men are more emotional beings than they are thinking, reasoning beings; that is, they are more influenced by an impact upon their emotions than by appeals to their intellect. In other words, more of us are "feeling" beings than we are "thinking" ones, using the word *feeling* here to mean emotions.

Perhaps we can best approach this subject by reviewing the more generally known theories or facts with regard to our emotions. Which feelings or sensations are designated as emotions? The more common ones are: fear, disgust, anger, delight, elation, affection, joy, grief, mirth, ecstasy, wonder, shame, awe, tenderness, love, hate, jealousy, anxiety, dread, pride, remorse, and exaltation. Several of these words refer to the same basic emotion but are differing degrees of it. For instance, awe, anxiety, dread, and fear are related, as are mirth and joy.

Taking all of the emotions collectively, they have been divided into broad categories according to their general effect upon us, such as strong and weak, pleasant and unpleasant, slow and the suddenly arising. Emotions which are pleasing to us—happiness, mirth, joy, and the like—are those

which are in harmony with our being. Fear also has its value. It makes us aware of that which threatens, puts us on our guard, gives us the opportunity to retreat or protect ourselves. These feelings are related to the very primary instincts and impulses of life itself.

The word *emotion* is from the Latin word *emovere*, meaning to *shake* or to *stir up*. However, not all of the so-called emotions necessarily agitate us. Some have a very *quieting* and calming effect, such as a great feeling of personal peace.

What brings about these emotional phases? Caused by changes in the internal conditions of the organism, they are the result of either external or internal stimuli. These stimuli act either indirectly or directly upon the organism to cause an *overt response*. As a result, then, one's behavior toward the person or thing causing the stimulus is either accelerated or retarded. The individual may verbally relate these feelings as pleasantness, happiness, anger, reproach, and so forth.

External stimuli, vibrations of various sources, arouse *afferent* (incoming) neural impulses that are conveyed to the central nervous system. The responding impulses then pass out by *efferent* (outgoing) neural pathways to different organs, glands, and so on. They produce motor changes either exciting or inhibiting the muscles and glands. Some of these effects are a flow of tears, sweat (cold sweat), goose flesh, and altering of the arterial blood flow causing a blanching or a flushing of the skin. A slower or faster pulse rate may also be experienced.

Considerable research has been done to disclose the effect upon the glands of stimuli causing emotional response. It has been noticed how excitement affects the adrenal glands. In one research project a number of athletes—football players who were actually on the bench—were examined after a particularly exciting game which they had sat out. A test taken of their blood indicated an excessive amount of sugar. The next day this excess was no longer apparent.

Fear, rage, and pain may excite the adrenal glands to prepare the organism for an emergency situation such as fleeing or fighting. Such emergencies call for an *exceptional expenditure of power* and endurance. Thus, these secretions pour forth to provide the required energy. Many of our experiences in life constituting part of our personal existence are emotional. We respond to conditions that will provide happiness or that call forth mirth, sympathy, curiosity, and so on. Further, our relationship in society is greatly dependent upon our interpreting the emotional responses of others with whom we associate.

We can tell by the smile, tears, the tone of voice, and gestures a great deal of what emotional feelings the person may be experiencing at the time. We are often obliged to adjust our own reactions as to what their emotions appear to be. For example, we do not *reason* about the jovial expression of another in our presence. Rather, we *respond* to it because it may induce a similar emotion within us. In this way, we can say that certain emotions, to an extent, are contagious; that is, they are a stimulus which

may arouse a similar emotion within ourselves.

But just what are the mechanics of emotions? That is, how do the *feelings* or *sensations* of the emotions come about from some external stimulus, for example? The theory known as the James-Lange Theory offers such an explanation. William James and the Danish researcher, Carl Georg Lange, arrived simultaneously at the same conclusion in the year 1880. The theory purports to show how man's awareness of emotions is related to his emotional organic changes.

James said: "The bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and our feeling of the same changes as they occur *is* the emotions."

Simply put, this theory tells us that stimuli which are perceived produce changes in the body, and the feelings that we have of these changes occurring are what we then experience as the emotions. In other words, the change in the body comes *before* the feeling of the emotion. For example, this would mean in perceiving some exciting fact, our heart might beat faster and our breathing become more rapid *before* we experience the emotion of fear.

It is said that this seems to contradict the general opinion and experience of the average person. However, in motion pictures taken of people reacting to exciting stimuli, it was determined that there was but a half-second between the exciting event being perceived and the physical change of the emotion. Consequently, it could be that the physical change does precede the feeling, and that the change in the organism is the cause of the emotion being felt.

The James-Lange Theory contends that the afferent impulses coming from the receptor senses, as eyes or ears, pass to the brain. The brain, as said, then sends out other impulses (the efferent) to affect the glands, motor nerves, and so on, and bring about the physical changes. W. B. Cannon, a noted researcher in the field of psychology, opposed the James-Lange Theory. He said the afferent impulses from the original stimulus at the external receptors (senses) are conveyed to the hypothalamus. (The hypothalamus is located in the brain on the floor of the thalamus.) From the hypothalamus the impulses are relayed to the cerebrum (the upper and anterior part of the brain). But there also arises in the hypothalamus a coordinating pattern of impulses. These include sensory impulses to the cortex where the emotional experience is realized and where there is an excitation of the motor nerves of the body.

The principal distinction between these two theories is this: Cannon holds that the hypothalamus controls and can inhibit the incoming impulses, thereby controlling to an extent the intensity of the emotions.

We would be indeed very cold, unexpressive human beings—more like computers—if we did not have the feelings of the emotions. For example, we would not personally know sorrow and grief, but neither would we know happiness, mercy, compassion, sympathy, or ecstasy. Of course, our emotions can become overexpressive as in the case of emotionally disturbed persons. With such persons there is the inability to inhibit or control the

exciting impressions whether external or internal.

If a person is normal and has no mental or nervous disorder, he can so exercise the *will* as to keep his emotions within bounds, though not necessarily to repress or suppress them entirely. The ancient Stoics of Greece considered an emotional display to be a weakness—even a display of compassion or mercy. They took pride in never showing fear or sensual pleasure. This is, of course, an extreme, and such behavior can be just as dangerous to the health as are excessive outbursts of the emotions.

In using will to control the emotions it must be fortified as much as possible by the use of reason. For analogy, consider the person with *stage fright*. His imagination of the condition with which he is confronted becomes the internal exciting stimulus producing the fright. However, the reason must assist the will to counter the image the mind has established. The reason must tell him that he knows his topic, and that his audience is not hostile but neutral, and so on.

Some individuals, however, have a greater innate sensitivity to external stimuli than do others. For further analogy, some persons will immediately consider a certain incident as a display of cruelty by a person, and they will react by being angered. Other persons may not be so affected by such behavior at all and might be termed, insofar as their responses are concerned, *coarse* and *cold*. Some persons are emotionally affected by certain music which they hear, while others are not moved by it. To a great extent, then, this varying emotional response in

regard to its degree of intensity can be genetic, that is, hereditary.

Exercise Number One:

We ordinarily refer to our emotions as “feelings.” However, the sensations of the emotions do not correspond to those of our sense faculty of touch. For example, qualities of the faculty of touch are hard, soft, cold, hot, rough, smooth, and so on. No emotional state actually produces such sensations.

Our emotions, however, do motivate us just as much as does the sense of touch. In other words, our emotions can cause us to act in certain ways either to intensify or to lessen the sensations which they cause.

Our response to an emotion, no matter how strong its feeling, is not always *positive*. By positive we mean that which is beneficial, which adds to our well-being. Those emotional responses which are *negative* are the ones which can be harmful to us physically, psychologically, and even socially. These negative emotions are just as natural to us physically and psychologically as are the positive ones. For example, *joy* and *anger* are extreme opposites as emotional states, yet each is equally a natural emotion. But anger is fundamentally a negative emotion, and joy positive.

An emotion such as anger is negative because it is dual in its reaction. We may in fury act against that which caused the emotion, but such an emotion is not entirely self-served, that is, the results of anger can also create an adverse situation that can be distressing and one that we may regret.

Reason and *will* are the safeguards against overly negative emotions and their often dire consequences. Reason will reveal which emotions are positive. For instance, affection, a form of love, will most often result in a favorable, pleasant response from the one toward whom it is directed.

If we inject reason into our emotional states, we will realize whether the consequences of the acts caused by such states will have negative or positive effects for us. The part which *will* play is to renounce, to suppress the negative emotions. The will must make dominant whatever positive aspect of an emotion reason may have revealed. This procedure results in emotional control.

Now, for our exercise, list the emotions that are set forth on page 1. When you experience any one of these emotional states, first, before giving vent to it, ask yourself: "Is it negative or positive?" Let the reason reveal which it is to you. Then apply the will power either to discharge the negative emotion, or, conversely, to support

what reason has designated as a positive aspect.

Exercise Number Two:

This exercise will help you to impose will power in relation to either the negative or positive aspects of an emotion. Once again refer to the list of emotions appearing on page 1. Next, form a *mental image*, that is, a picture in mind that to you represents either the negative or positive aspects of the various emotions.

For example, as you look at the word *hate*, what image, design, or thing suggests the negative condition of that emotion? Then draw or write whatever symbolizes that characteristic to you. Whenever one of the emotional states arises, look at the symbol which you have drawn or the word which you have written representing it. Keep that symbol and what it depicts foremost in your consciousness so that your *will* is strengthened by it to act for or against whatever the symbol or word represents.